



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 22, 2018

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL JOINS URBAN GROWERS COLLECTIVE TO ANNOUNCE  
ORGANIZATION HAS REACHED MAJOR MILESTONE**

*Innovative Organization Dedicated to Reducing Food Deserts Has Reached 10,000 People Across  
Chicago with its Fresh Moves Buses*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today joined the Urban Growers Collective to announce the organization has reached 10,000 people across Chicago with its Fresh Moves Mobile Markets, former CTA buses converted to fresh food markets.

"We are proud to partner with the Urban Growers Collective to expand access to fresh, healthy food in Chicago communities," Mayor Emanuel said. "We are not just growing fresh fruits and vegetables, together we are growing jobs and expanding opportunities for Chicagoans."

Urban Growers Collective rooted in growing food, cultivates nourishing environments which support health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture.

"This program is at the heart of our work, growing healthy food and being able to amplify food access opportunities on the south and west sides of our city has supported our ability to reach this many people by bringing healthy, low cost produce, health information directly to the people," Erika Allen, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Operations for the Urban Growers Collective said. "We could not have done this without the support and vision of Mayor Emanuel and his visionary administration."

The organization's programs include the Fresh Moves Mobile Markets. By converting City buses to farmers' markets on wheels the organization provides an innovative way to sell local, Chicago-grown fresh, healthy and affordable food to serve the immediate needs of residents suffering from food insecurity.

"I commend Urban Growers Collective on achieving such a great milestone because there is tremendous value in expanding urban agriculture programs in Chicago," Congressman Danny Davis said. "Growing and sharing these foods are important for our community – these activities have a positive impact on the environment, improve the nutrition of Chicagoans, and teach residents about

farming and small business operations. We need to do all we can to encourage these innovative programs to address hunger, improve nutrition, and train our residents.”

Currently, Fresh Moves offers customers the ability to pay not only with cash, credit, and debit, but also with their SNAP benefits, Farmers Market Nutrition Program Senior and WIC coupons, for which, they provide Double Value (spend a dollar & get a dollar) to leverage the purchasing power to customers receiving this type of nutrition assistance.

The Fresh Moves Mobile Market Program was designed to use a holistic or “closed loop” approach that also includes social enterprise, nutrition education, community organizing, and advocacy. The organization partners with community sites, health centers, schools, senior centers and farmers’ markets to make consistent scheduled stops each week giving community members the opportunity to “Hop on Board and Shop.”

Urban Growers Collective operates seven urban farms on 11 -acres of land predominately located on Chicago’s South Side. These farms are production oriented with staff integrating education, training, and production to meet program goals. Each farm site demonstrates the capacity for both large volumes of production and the ecological and social impacts of farming in society.

The organization’s Farmers for Chicago job-readiness program trains more than 300 teens annually through an 18-month job-training program. The Incubator Farmer program provides land and technical assistance for new Chicago farmers, and the head- start preschool farm serves more than 150 preschoolers and their families in partnership with Ounce of Prevention. The organization has also provided education to a larger audience through a series of agriculture, small business development, and equality building workshops.

In 2012 Mayor Emanuel joined U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to announce a targeted investment in Chicago’s mobile fresh food market. Through funding made available by the USDA and a partnership with the CTA, Fresh Moves doubled the mobile fresh food operations of its Mobile Market Bus, expanding its existing routes on the west side of Chicago to new routes in south side communities with the addition of another Mobile Market Bus. The funding made available through the USDA was used to completely retrofit the bus to be a fully-operational mobile market. At the time Fresh Moves operated one bus, also retrofitted from an out-of-service bus donated by the CTA, in the Lawndale and Austin neighborhoods on the west side.

In 2016 Fresh Moves began servicing CTA bus turnarounds and City community service centers. In addition, CTA provided an additional out-of-service transit bus plus fuel and maintenance for one year in support of the program which will offer affordable, locally-sourced fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved areas.

Urban Growers Collective was founded in 2017, built upon the foundation of Growing Power, a nonprofit organization and land trust established in Milwaukee, WI in 1993. Growing Power operated its urban farming and education non-profit for 25-years before closing its doors in the Fall of 2017.

###